

Vitalizing voluntary sport clubs: a process consultation approach

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Introduction

Dutch voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) are facing several challenges in perceived consumerist behavior by members (Van der Roest, 2015), demands by the government to attribute to the social policy agenda (Waardenburg, 2016; Coalter, 2007) and declining number of members in complex contexts (Wollebæk, 2009). Between 300-500 sport club consultants, mostly funded by local governments or sport associations, are tasked to vitalize these VSCs. Most consultants play an expert role delivering generic intervention on specific topics as recruiting volunteers, sponsorships or positive behavior support. The other consultants play a process consultation role in which a holistic strategic change approach is used for more sustainable development (Schein, 1999). Aim of this study is to understand how various stakeholders make sense of the approach, competencies and interventions used by the process consultant within a specific context.

Method

A multiple case study was conducted in which five process consultants work with a VSC. A case study protocol was developed that observed the consultant in three sessions at the club, interviews were conducted with the consultant, the board of the club, and other relevant stakeholders. With a cross-case synthesis patterns were developed in the way the consultants worked and how these approaches were interpreted and valued by the various stakeholders.

Results and conclusion

In the results both the approaches and interventions (repertoire) of the consultant as their competences and qualities were analyzed. New insights on how consultants can contribute to the sustainable development of VSCs will be presented.

Key words

Voluntary sport clubs, organizational development, governance, process consultation,

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